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Stimulus plan could benefit counties

By the National Association of Counties

The House Democratic leadership unveiled its proposals for an economic stimulus package, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, H.R. 1), on Jan. 15. The package would provide \$550 billion in new domestic spending and \$275 billion in tax relief. It also covers many NACo priorities, including transportation, an increase in the Medicaid federal match, rural development broadband deployment and energy efficiency.

The House passed the bill by a vote of 244-188 late last month. The goal is to have a bill ready for President Obama's signature by President's Day recess in mid-February.

In a meeting Jan. 16, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's staff said the House, Senate and Obama transition team have been working together closely on the package.

Most of the funding in ARRA would go to existing programs. While some details of the tax relief and entitlement spending are still being worked out, the following is a summary of the information available as of Jan. 22.

The House bill provides \$43.1 billion for transportation programs, including highways and bridges, transit, aviation and Amtrak. In most cases the legislation includes 100 percent funding with no match requirements. There are "use it or lose it" provisions or time limits for spending the funds after which the funds could lapse, be redistributed or be taken back, and a number of oversight and transparency reporting requirements. Finally, there is a maintenance-of-effort requirement.

Highways and Bridges: Highways and bridges would receive \$30 billion with no state or local match required. The money will be distributed among the states

based on states' 2008 share of highway and bridge dollars. There are \$800 million in set-asides, including \$300 million for Indian reservation roads and \$250 million National Park roads. Of the remaining \$29.2 billion, 55 percent or \$16.1 billion would go to the states, and 45 percent or \$13.1 billion would be distributed within the states using the Surface Transportation Program (STP) formula. Priority will be given to projects on the State Transportation Improvement Program and/or TIP.

In general, this means the award of \$20.5 billion will be at the discretion of the states, \$7.4 billion will be divided by local areas determined by population, and \$1.3 billion will go for enhancement projects. About half of the \$30 billion needs to be obligated within 120 days or the state will lose funds to other states. The other half must be obligated by Aug. 1, 2010.

For local government, the rules are slightly different. Half the funds going to localities must be obligated within 90 days and the remainder by July 1, 2010, or the money goes back to the state. The STP formula divides spending among areas of above 200,000 population, under 200,000 population, in areas of fewer than 5,000 population as well as a portion that can be spent anywhere in a state and a set-aside for enhancements.

Mass Transit: Mass transit would receive \$9 billion, all with a 100-percent federal share. Six billion dollars is allocated under the transit formula program. Under the formula, \$5.4 billion would go to urban areas and \$600 million to rural regions. Another \$2 billion goes out by for-





MACo News

Commissioners, elected officials to benefit at 2009 Midwinter Conference

The 2009 edition of the annual MACo Midwinter Conference, Feb. 9-12 at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel in Helena, will be the perfect chance for county elected officials to learn more about state and local government issues.

The event is full of seminars focusing on a variety of timely and critical subjects relevant to every participant.

For more information, call MACo at (406) 444-4360 or register online at our Web site.

MACo Midwinter Conference Draft Agenda Feb. 9-12, 2009, at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel in Helena

Monday, Feb. 9

- 11 am-5 pm **Registration**
- 3 pm **Exhibitor set up**
- 1-3 pm **All MACo committees meet**
- 3:30 pm **Hard Rock Mining Counties Meeting**
- 3:30 pm **6 County Fort Peck Lake Group Meeting**
- 3:30 pm **Urban Counties Meeting**
- 6 pm **Board of Directors Dinner Meeting**

Tuesday, Feb. 10 (Mental Health Day)

- 7:30 am-5 pm **Registration**
- 8 am-5 pm **Exhibitors**
- 8-8:15 am **Mental Health Commitment Process State Perspective**
- 8:15-8:30 am **Montana State Hospital Perspective**
- 8:30-9 am **Urban County Perspective**
- 9-9:30 am **Rural County Perspective**
- 9:30-10 am **Questions & Answers**
- 10-10:30 am **Break/visit with exhibitors**
- 10:30-11 am **Transportation of Mentally Ill**
- 11-11:30 am **Law Enforcement Academy Transport Training**
- 11:30-11:45 am **Transportation-Private Sector**
- 11:45-12:15 pm **Questions & Answers**
- 12:15-1:15 pm **Lunch**
- 1:15-1:30 pm **Billings Crisis Center**
- 1:30-2 pm **Service Area Authority**
- 2-2:30 pm **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill**
- 2:30-3 pm **Break/visit with exhibitors**
- 3-4 pm **State and Federal Legislation**
- 4 pm **Oil, Gas, and Coal Counties Meeting**
- 5:30 pm **JPIA/JPA Trustees Dinner Meeting**

Wednesday, Feb. 11

- 7:30 am-5 pm **Registration**
- 8 am-5 pm **Exhibitors**
- 8-8:30 am **County History Initiative**
- 8:30-9:40 am **State Agency Reports**
- 9:40-10 am **Local Board of Health Training**
- 10-10:30 am **Break**
- 10:30-11:30 **Department of Commerce**
- 11:30-Noon **Department of Livestock**
- Noon-1 pm **Lunch**
- 1-2 pm **FEMA Floodplain Mapping Update**
- 2-3 pm **JPA Annual Membership Meeting**
- 3-3:30 pm **Break/visit with exhibitors**
- 3:30-4:30 pm **JPIA Annual Membership Meeting**
- 4:30 pm **Reservation Counties Meeting**
- 4:30 pm **Coalition of Forest Counties Meeting**
- 6 pm **Health Care Trust Dinner Meeting**

Thursday, Feb. 12

- 8 am-5 pm **Registration**
- 8:30-10:30 am **General session-Legislative issues Senate & Local Government Chairs**
- 10:30-11 am **Break**
- 11 am **Load buses for trip to Capitol**
- 11:30-1 pm **Lunch in the Rotunda with legislators**
- 1-4 pm **Spend remainder of day at Capitol**
- 1 pm **Bus to return to Red Lion Colonial**
- 4 pm **Bus to return to Red Lion Colonial**

Committee meetings open for all members

All MACo committee meetings are open to every member who'd like to attend, so please be a part of any committee that may interest you. We've included a list of committee chairs and their contact info on page 8.



MACo News

Using prescription medications takes caution, understanding

By Owen Voigt, MACo Health Care Trust Administrator

Trips to the pharmacy in Canada were much different than they were in the United States. Back in the rodeo days when I had enough pain to affect my riding, I would go to the local Canadian pharmacy and get a bottle of what was called 222 over the counter, without a prescription. The 222s were regular sized pills that contained codeine, Tylenol and acetamaphine. They were great and took the edge off nicely. They also cost \$8 for 100.

I recall once I went to the ER at a hospital in the U.S. After x-rays and a doctor visit, I was given a prescription for, you guessed it, Tylenol with codeine, pretty much the same as my Canadian fix. At the U.S. pharmacy, they cost \$20-plus for 14 pills.

For the 12 months ending Dec. 31, 2008, the Health Care Trust spent more than \$1.2 million for prescription drugs. That amounted to 17 percent of all claims paid. This does not include deductibles and co-insurance paid by our members. Think about the different things we medicate for: high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, inactive thyroid glands, sleep disorders, depression, arthritis and on and on.

Medications make us function in such a way as we could not without them. For many people, medications allow them a lifestyle they could not otherwise enjoy. New medications are developed virtually every day and generics become available regularly to replace the previous preferred medications.

I checked a Web site called medicationsense.com. The medication sense data shows in 1998, there were 2,523,000,000 prescriptions written; in 2002 the number of prescriptions had risen to 3,340,000,000. That is 12 prescriptions for every man, woman and child in the U.S.

Drug sales in 2002 were nearly \$219 billion. Kaiser Foundation reports from 1997 to 2007, the number of prescriptions purchased increased 72 percent (from 2.2 billion to 3.8 billion) compared to a U.S. population growth of 11 percent. Prescription drug companies are reported to be the most profitable industry in the U.S. during the last decade or so.

One of our plan members uses a medication to treat

an illness that costs \$762.72 per shot. The member has this shot every week. It is a wonderful drug that greatly alleviates the pain and discomfort of the condition. Another member receives a medication where the daily cost is just over \$107 per day. Again, this is an important part of that person's health care.

Bio-medications are the fastest growing type of medications out there. They are great drugs and provide people with a lifestyle they could not achieve without them. Generally, they are given intravenously on a monthly basis and start at around \$2,000 per treatment.

Health care costs have risen in the single-digit range the last few years, however, prescription drugs have been and continue to rise at a double-digit rate. Remember the increase is not just due to the increasing cost of drugs, but also takes into account the rising rate at which prescriptions are being dispensed.

For consumers who need to fill their prescriptions, the HCT suggests you always ask if there is a generic available and appropriate for your needs. Most health plans have a sliding scale for member co-pays. Generics cost less, so the plan entices you to use them whenever possible by offering lower co-pays to the member for those types of medications.

The next most expensive are preferred medications with the most expensive being non-preferred medications. As the cost raises generally so does your co-pay. If you are taking a long term medication it is almost always less expensive for you to get the longest fill you can: that being a 90-day fill rather than a 30-day fill. Different plans vary, so it is good to know what your plan provides and pays for before you purchase prescriptions.

Health plans should have a system check on a regular basis that compares all the medications each person is taking to ensure there are no drug interactions between the chemicals in each drug being taken by a person. This is a behind-the-scenes service plans should provide to assist their members to keep them from taking a combination of drugs that are harmful to the health of the person.

The use of prescription drugs reminds me of the legislature: proponents and opponents. Ask anyone taking them and most will tell you they are lifesavers. When your physician prescribes a medication for you, be a good consumer and ask the physician if medication and specifically this medication is the best and lowest cost alternative to treat your condition.



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Health Care Trust Calendar of Events

Feb. 11	HCT board meet (Midwinter Conference)
April 17	Rates mailed to July renewal groups
May 1-June 15	July open enrollment period
May 15	Signed renewal rates due



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Bruce Brensdal; Executive Director
Board of Housing
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Website: housing.mt.gov

One-stop reference source for virtually all state, federal and local development based public finance programs:

Gary Morehouse; Asst. Division Administrator
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E-mail: gmorehouse@mt.gov
Website: mtfinanceonline.com

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Gary Morehouse, Asst. Division Administrator
Business Resources Division
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Website: businessresources.mt.gov

Herb Kulow; Portfolio Manager
Board of Investments, Infrastructure Loan Program
Phone: (406) 444-1218
E-mail: hkulow@mt.gov
Website: investmentmt.com/Programs/instate

Local government financing:

Dave Cole; Administrator
Community Development Division
Phone: (406) 841-2776
e-mail: dacole@mt.gov
Website: <http://comdev.mt.gov/>

Louise Welsh; Bond Program Officer;
Board of Investments, INTERCAP Loan Program
Phone: (406) 444-0891
E-mail: Lwelsh@mt.gov
Website: investmentmt.com/Programs/Intericap

Herb Kulow; Portfolio Manager
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MACo News

Counties could benefit greatly from economic stimulus package

Continued from front page

mula for the fixed guideway modernization program and \$1 billion for the discretionary transit new starts program. Recipients will have 120 days after grant awards to obligate 50 percent of the money and two years after the award for the remaining 50 percent.

Aviation: The Airport Improvement Program (AIP) would receive \$3 billion, with a 100-percent federal share. Unlike the existing AIP program, none of the funds will be sent out using a formula and the spending will be all discretionary and must be applied for. Contracts shall be entered into for at least 50 percent of the grant awards within 120 days a grant award and 21 months for the other 50 percent.

Amtrak: The rail section of the bill provides for \$1.1 billion in spending. Amtrak would receive \$800 million for capital projects and debt service with priority given to repair, rehabilitation and upgrading of rail infrastructure. Grants totaling \$300 million are provided to states for their own intercity rail infrastructure.

Medicaid Match: ARRA includes an \$87-billion increase to the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) through the end of FY10. All states would get a 4.8-percent increase to the non-federal share of Medicaid with additional amounts for states with higher rates of unemployment. The bill also includes a mandatory pass-through to counties required to contribute to the non-

federal share.

Health Care for the Unemployed: An additional \$8.6 billion is aimed at funding optional state Medicaid coverage for people who lost their jobs (and their dependents) and whose family income does not exceed the state-determined level, but is no higher than twice the federal poverty level or who are receiving food stamps. The bill also would designate \$30.3 billion to subsidize COBRA premiums.

Regulatory Relief: Extends the moratorium on the six regulations through June 30, 2009, and adds a new moratorium on the seventh Medicaid regulation relating to outpatient hospital services.

To learn more details about the stimulus package, read the rest of this story at www.naco.org.

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County News

Legislators threaten Local Government Center funding

By the Montana Association of Counties and the MSU Local Government Center

As many county elected officials already know, the Local Government Center (LGC) at MSU has been providing training and education for those who serve Montana's counties since 1989. Without the center, whose funding may be cut during this legislative session, there would not be a non-partisan and unbiased institution whose services are available to all local officials.

That's why it's vital for MACo members to urge the House Appropriations Subcommittee to include funding of the LGC. Without its \$150,000 appropriation, the center might cease to exist as early as July 1.

We've included some background on the center here so you can see how important a role it plays in Montana.

The center is an educational outreach organization charged with helping the state's county and municipal governments to effectively and professionally deliver services to their citizens. The LGC was created in 1985 to provide assistance to those local bodies undergoing the voter review process in which citizens can vote to evaluate and change the way their local government operates. The Montana Board of Regents officially authorized the LGC in 1989; the state legislature formally established the center's mission 1993.

Each year, the LGC provides educational and certification workshops to meet the growing demands for professional development opportunities for elected and appointed public officials. Those activities include:

- Montana Mayors Academy/Forum
- Newly-Elected City Council Training
- Newly-Elected County Officials/County Commissioner Certification Program

The LGC serves as a conduit of applied research for dissemination of information vital to strategic planning purposes of local governments. Recent examples include:

- Fiscal Year 2007 County Salary and Benefits Survey
- Survey Regarding the Employment Status of Montana's City Attorneys (2006)
- Montana Local Government Profiles (annual)

The LGC provides a wide range of technical assistance to cities and counties. Recent issues addressed and services provided by the LGC include:

- Executive/legislative relations
- Statewide communication interoperability plan
- Special improvement districts

The LGC's publications aim to inform and engage local government practitioners and the citizens they serve. They include:

- Montana's Local Government Review (Rev. Ed. 2008), Kenneth L. Weaver and Judith A. Mathre
- Serving on County Board, Districts, Commissions and Committees in Montana (2008), Paul R. Lachapelle and Mary Anne Anderson
- Public Lands in Montana: A Guide for Counties and Communities (2007), Paul R. Lachapelle and Mary Anne Anderson

The LGC works to develop and sustain long-term partnerships and collaborations with local governments, statewide associations and non-profit organizations such as MACo, the Montana League of Cities and Towns, the Montana Municipal Insurance Authority, and others.

The \$150,000 appropriation supports salary and benefits of a director, program coordinator and graduate research assistant.



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Flood Insurance

Part 2 of 2

The National Flood Insurance Program, a federal program administered by FEMA, offers flood insurance in communities that have agreed to adopt and enforce minimum floodplain management standards. More than 20,000 communities participate in the NFIP.

Flood insurance covers losses caused by a general and temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of two or more acres of normally dry land area or of two or more properties (at least one of which is the policyholder's property) from:

- Overflow of inland or tidal waters
- Unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any source
- Mudflow
- Collapse or subsidence of land along the shore of a lake or similar body of water. This must result from erosion or undermining caused by waves or currents of water that exceed normal levels and result in a flood

Flood coverage can apply to both the building and its contents. Separate deductibles apply for building damage and damaged contents. Normally, a 30-day waiting period

applies from the date the business buys the policy before coverage begins. Businesses can buy coverage through their insurance agent in amounts up to \$500,000 for the building and \$500,000 for its contents. Excess coverage may be available from specialty insurance companies.

The cost of coverage varies by the risk; the premium will be relatively low in a low-to-moderate risk area and higher near bodies of water.

Every organization should consider purchasing flood insurance. No location is immune to the risk, the cost of coverage is much less than the cost of paying for repairs out of pocket, and the protection is more reliable than possible federal disaster assistance. Because the damage can be so devastating, the risk of flooding is something no organization can afford to ignore.

CONTENT DISCLAIMER: The information provided above is provided from a general insurance/risk management perspective and is NOT legal advice. Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. (AJG) does not provide legal advice as it is not qualified to do so. AJG recommends that you seek the advice of legal counsel in order to become fully apprised of the legal implications related to the information provided above as such implications are highly dependent on the unique facts and circumstances applicable to an individual situation.

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County News

Fred J. Weiler, 1923~2008

Fred J. Weiler, 85, died in Columbus on Dec. 25. He was a former Stillwater County commissioner and MACo board member.

Weiler, a Montana native, was a lifelong rancher and was in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He also served on a variety of electrical co-op, museum, historical, school, and conservation boards. He was a county commissioner from 1989 to 1994.

MACo committee chair contact info

To learn more about the 12 MACo committees, please contact the chairperson listed below:

Agriculture: Kathy Bessette (bessettek@co.hill.mt.us)

Community, Economic Development & Labor: Cynthia Johnson (pococo@3rivers.net)

Conference Planning: Mike Murray (mmurray@co.lewis-clark.mt.us)

Energy: John Prinkki (commissioners@co.carbon.mt.us)

Health & Human Services: Bill Kennedy (bkennedy@co.yellowstone.mt.us)

Information Technology: Sandra Broesder (pococo@3rivers.net)

Justice & Public Safety: Andy Hunthausen (ahunthausen@co.lewis-clark.mt.us)

Land Use & Development: Paddy Trusler (commissioners@lakemt.gov)

Public Lands: Carol Brooker (brooker@blackfoot.net)

Resolutions & Legislative: Mike Murray (mmurray@co.lewis-clark.mt.us)

Tax, Budget & Finance: Allan Underdal (tcomm@3rivers.net)

Transportation: John Ostlund (jostlund@co.yellowstone.mt.us)

Melissa Greenhagen, 1971~2009

Melissa Greenhagen, 37, died in Glasgow on Jan. 17. She was the Valley County clerk of court as well as a volunteer emergency medical technician.

Greenhagen, a Montana native, was married to Craig Greenhagen and had four children. In addition to her county duties, she also was in leadership positions in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. She was on the board of the Fort Peck Theatre and also was active in the Hilene Youth Hockey Association.

She began serving as clerk of court in 2005.



Melissa Greenhagen



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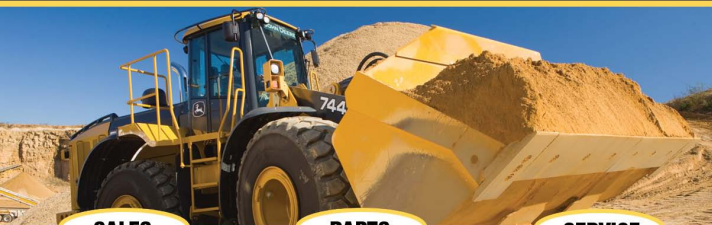
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County/NACo News



NACo offers scholarships for seniors

This spring, four high school seniors will earn \$2,000 for college from the NACo/Nationwide Scholarship. Winning applicants will have written a short essay describing the most important actions in 2009 that a public sector employee can take to help them get ready for retirement or that the new President and Congress can take in 2009 concerning America's retirement savings.

Applicants must be graduating high school seniors who are legal U.S. residents, their parent or grandparent must be enrolled in and contributing to the NACo 457 Deferred Compensation Plan, and the student must enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study no later than the fall term of the 2009–2010 school year at an accredited two- or four-year college. The deadline is March 15.

For more information, visit www.naco.org/retirementscholarship or www.nrsforu.com.

Beaverhead weed staff wins award

The Wildlife Habitat Council named the Beaverhead County Weed Department one of its 2008 Community Partner of the Year. The county one of five finalists for the national award given by the council for contributions to wildlife habitat conservation and environmental education.

Nominees are recognized for making a significant contribution and lasting impact on a corporate site's wildlife enhancement program. Matador Cattle Co. nominated the department for the award.

PERI conference scholarships online

Applications are available for the 12th Annual Public Entity Risk Institute (PERI) Small Entity Scholarship Program, which will provide financial assistance to help small organizations attend the 2009 Public Risk Management Association (PRIMA) Conference and Expo. PERI will accept scholarship applications through Feb. 27, 2009.

PERI, a nonprofit research institute focused on risk management training and education, plans to award up to 20 scholarships valued at \$1,000 in financial assistance to small public entities and community nonprofit organizations interested in attending the 2009 PRIMA Conference in Dallas, Texas, in May.

For more information, visit www.primacentral.org or contact PRIMA at (703) 528-7701.

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NACo News



Network of Care sites to offer social services information, help

NACo, in partnership with Trilogy Integrated Resources, has launched a highly interactive, single information Internet network at www.naco.networkofcare.org that consumers, community-based organizations, and local and state governments can use to access a wide variety of important information relating to social services.

The Network of Care's individual Web sites and eLearning online training services focus on several social services areas — such as behavioral health, aging and people with disabilities, developmental disabilities, children and families, domestic violence and public health. The Web sites give critical service information, support, advocacy and state-of-the-art communication tools to consumers, caregivers and providers.

The resources available in the Network of Care include an easy-to-use service directory, comprehensive health library, a secure personal health record-keeping tool for consumers and caregivers, a political advocacy tool and links to pertinent Web sites nationwide.

Public and private agencies can use the network's comprehensive eLearning management system, to develop, deliver, track and manage employee training. The system manages the training and development process of online as well as classroom courses, vastly improving

efficiency and lasting outcomes.

The Network of Care was selected through a nationally solicited competitive bid process by Fairfax County, Va. Acting as the lead public agency, the county issued a national request for proposal (RFP) for a comprehensive, integrated Web-based information and referral system. Trilogy Integrated Resources' Network of Care was selected as the sole provider of these services and partners with NACo to offer the program throughout the U.S.

For more information, contact Jim Sawyer at (202) 661-8868 or jsawyer@naco.org.

Deadline for award program app Feb. 13

Applications for NACo's 2009 Achievement Award Program is now available at www.naco.org. The annual, non-competitive awards program recognizes innovative county government programs.

Awards are given in a number of program categories such as arts and historic preservation, children and youth, community and economic development, jails-corrections, county administration, emergency management, environmental protection, health, human services, libraries, parks and recreation, transportation and volunteers.

One outstanding program from each category is selected for the Best of Category Award. The winners will be invited to Washington, D.C., for a major recognition event during County Government Week (May 3-9).

For more information, contact Kathryn Murphy at kmurphy@naco.org or (202) 661-8806.

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(A) Amount per pay period for inflation by 4% annually.

(B) Assumes an average annual return of 8%. Also assumes savings are invested at the end of each month. Total balance of \$92,015 does not reflect deductions for federal and state taxes. Withdrawals are taxed as ordinary income.

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Around Our Counties

Law Enforcement

LIBERTY COUNTY Undersheriff Doug Riggan survived a shooting near Chester in early January. Riggan was called to investigate a domestic disturbance at a ranch when an employee fired a rifle at him. The bullet struck Riggan a glancing blow to his head, but he survived with minimal injury. The employee, Josh Gwynn, was shortly arrested and jailed.

PARK COUNTY must rehire former deputy Blake Blatter and pay him almost \$100,000 in damages after a jury ruled Blatter's firing by the sheriff's office was unjustified and improper. Blatter was fired in 2007 after refusing to reveal the source of a rumor about two county detention officers. Because he heard the rumor while off-duty, Blatter claimed his right to privacy protected him from revealing the source.

GLACIER COUNTY Undersheriff Jeff Fauque was cleared of any wrongdoing in December after a state investigation disproved narcotic allegations from local citizens. The allegations centered on missing drugs from a Cut Bank

home last fall. Fauque returned to duty on Dec. 26 following a six-week paid administrative leave.

Personnel

PRAIRIE COUNTY has a new attorney. Rebecca Convery replaced Scott Pederson in mid-January. Convery, the former Hardin city attorney, was chosen among four applicants after Pederson announced his resignation last year.

LINCOLN COUNTY took applications through late January to fill the justice of the peace seat vacated by Gary Hicks. The former justice of the peace was removed from office after the state supreme court ruled a wealth of accusations, including sexual misconduct, were proven by evidence. There are two years left in Hicks' term.

RAVALLI COUNTY commissioners unanimously approved the promotion of John Lavey from interim planning director to acting planning director. Lavey is a Boise State University graduate who joined the planning staff in 2006. He will serve a standard six-month probation before he's eligible to be named

the permanent director.

BUTTE-SILVER BOW COUNTY prevailed in federal court in January when a judge threw out a lawsuit filed by an employee. Tony Bonney was fired by the county in 2006 after being caught using county equipment at his home. He was rehired two years later, but filed the suit last May because his firing was in retaliation for complaints he made about fellow employees receiving overtime.

Miscellany

GALLATIN COUNTY commissioners awarded a developer's request to use an off-site pond for fire protection in January. The Bocomo Business Park, located south of Belgrade, will rely on a nearby Kenyon Noble Lumber and Hardware fire fill pond for water storage. The commission voted 2-1 in favor of the variance.

BLAINE COUNTY commissioners approved a notice of intent in late December to invest up to \$30,000 in a public transit system for Blaine and Hill counties. Transportation would provide daily rides west from Fort Belknap through Hill

County and south to Box Elder, with other routes to be considered. While a transit authority has yet to be created, the notice requires a formal plan and interlocal agreement acceptable to all potential partners.

POWELL COUNTY's planning department began sending letters in January to telecommunications companies asking them to pay for a countywide study to map future cellular tower locations. The department is seeking financial assistance due to the project's potentially high cost. The plan was proposed to the county's planning board last year.

HILL COUNTY, along with Dawson, Roosevelt, and Valley counties, will once again have flights between their county seats and Billings when Great Lakes Airlines begins service Feb. 1. Havre, Glendive, Wolf Point, and Glasgow lost their connections to the Magic City when Big Sky Airlines ceased operations in March 2008. The new service resumes thanks to the federal government's Essential Air Service that subsidizes airline operations to small communities.

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Announcements & Reminders

Mark Your Calendars

2009 Holidays

The following is a list of legal holidays in 2009 and the dates they will be observed by most state employees.

Legal holidays

Lincoln's & Washington's Birthday
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Columbus Day
Veterans' Day
Thanksgiving Day
Christmas Day

Observed

Mon., Feb. 16
Mon., May 25
Fri., July 3
Mon., Sept. 7
Mon., Oct. 12
Wed., Nov. 11
Thurs., Nov. 26
Fri., Dec. 25

NOTE: If the holiday occurs on a weekend, the workday closest to the holiday is treated as the holiday for pay and leave purposes.

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February

Feb. 4 State of the Judiciary Address*
Feb. 9-12 MACo Midwinter Conference*
Feb. 9 MACo Board of Directors Dinner Meeting*
Feb. 11 JPIA/JPA Annual Membership Meeting (at Midwinter)*
Feb. 11 HCT Trustees Dinner Meeting (at Midwinter)*
Feb. 20 State of Education Address*
Feb. 27-28 State Legislative Transmittal Break

March

March 7-11 NACo Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C.
March 8 Daylight Savings Time begins

Upcoming Events

Sept. 20-24 MACo's 100th Annual Conference*

*All meetings are held in Helena unless noted.

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11. Carlotta Grandstaff, Ravalli County
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444-4360 Fax: 442-5238
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